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ABSTRACT

Findings from a study that examined leadership responses to the conflict and change associated with desegregation in the Denver Public Schools from 1959-77 are presented in this paper. The theoretical framework is based on conflict theory, the dissatisfaction theory of democracy, and a classification system for communities based on superintendent/board roles. Methodology involved document analysis of newspaper reports and school board minutes and interviews with key individuals, with a focus on superintendents and board members. Results indicate that conflict theory rather than dissatisfaction theory is a useful organizer for the study of leadership responses to desegregation. The changes in school governance reflected the racial and ethnic diversity that had been unacknowledged. The shift from a superintendent-dominated to a factional district contributed to decreased superintendent autonomy and increased board member interference. Alignment between the community and school governance appeared to come from a stable core of consistent voters who were committed to the survival of the system. A conclusion is that as demographic and economic forces bring change to American schools, an understanding of conflict management and the change process is increasingly important. (16 references) (LMI)

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Leadership Responses to Desegregation in the Denver Public Schools: A Historical Study, 1959-1977

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Leadership Responses to Desegregation in the Denver Public Schools: A Historical Study, 1959-1977

Mary Jean Taylor, Ph.D., RMC Research Corporation

Recent Supreme Court decisions have moved away from mandatory busing as a means of increasing equality between the races. It has been almost forty years since the historic *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* decision that led to court-ordered desegregation efforts in our nation's public schools. Although the *Brown* decision was in 1954, it wasn't until the 60s and 70s that the courts began enforcing it. The conservative Court of the 90s is reversing earlier decisions and backing away from the "social engineering" it was so frequently accused of during the past three decades. But those early, perhaps naive, rulings have contributed to dramatic changes in American society. Those changes did not come easily and much of the conflict that was generated by desegregation efforts centered on the public schools and their leadership. This study focused on leadership responses to the conflict and change associated with desegregation in the public schools of Denver, Colorado.

Many, if not most, educators tend to think of the schools as the center of the educational system. The current emphasis on site-based shared decision making acknowledges the fact that the actual day to day work of schools takes place in individual schools and classrooms. The roles of the superintendent and the school board and their function in providing leadership for the schools is less clear. In most of our major cities there has been a shift in the dynamics of school district governance. Conflict related to desegregation and the allocation of resources within the district has been responsible for part of that shift. As a result of public dissatisfaction with school governance, serious critics of the public education system have called for the elimination of local school boards and the role of superintendent in big city schools. In the 1980s, a term of 5.6 years was the national average for school superintendents. In many of our major cities, it is less than half that (Rocky Mountain News, 1991). Clearly, the governance of our big city school districts is in transition. Major changes in the governance in our large city districts, began in the 50s and were accelerated during the 60s and 70s as a result of the focus of civil rights leaders on bringing about change within and through the public schools.

The ideal of equal educational opportunity is, or at least was, uniquely American. It is an ideal that relates to control, the control of an educated citizenry over its own governance and the control of individuals over their own destinies. But efforts to realize the ideal of equality continually

confront existing power and class structures within the community and the nation. As a result, the public schools become "the social arena where the tension is reflected and the contest played out between the promise of democracy and the reality of class division" (Kirp, 1982). The role of the public schools in sorting, selecting, and credentialing students is well known (Ogbu,1987). Throughout American history, disparities in the distribution of opportunity via public education been common and widespread. During the first half of this century the distribution of opportunity, through the allocation of financial, physical and human resources within most school districts was determined primarily by the elite business and professional members of the community. Black and Hispanic students generally did not fare well. *Brown v. Topeka* was designed to change that.

The study of leadership responses to desegregation in Denver provided an opportunity to understand the human dynamics of dealing with conflict and change from the perspective of superintendents and school board members. Traditional methods of document review were combined with interviews and oral histories to get a more accurate picture of the actions and interactions between district leaders. Efforts to restructure school governance are a response to widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of the current system. Those efforts will be better informed if we understand the current situation and how it came to be. The story of leadership responses in Denver provides a portion of that understanding. It is not the new procedures that make change difficult, it is the actions and interactions of people that are the most difficult component of any change effort. The combination of document review and oral history used for this study holds promise of increasing our understanding of the role of individuals and school leaders in the change process.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study came from education, sociology and political science. Gibbs (1989) argued that control is the central notion of sociology. His basic premise is that all of human behavior may be understood as an effort to control events and circumstances impinging upon one's own life and future well-being. As a result, any human activity and interaction may best be understood as a quest for control. The notion of control includes and goes beyond power issues and offers a rationale for the quest for power and the existence of conflict. Any study of conflict eventually leads to a study of power relationships in a situation where there are limited resources (or there is the perception of limited resources).

Conflict Theory

Three components of conflict theory were used to understand the dynamics of change within the community, the actions and reactions of district leaders, and the changes in the nature of the conflict over time. The time frame of this study was selected because it appears to be a full conflict cycle as posited by Rummel (Folger and Poole, 1984). According to this theory there are five identifiable phases in any conflict cycle, beginning with a period of latent conflict, moving into a period of overt conflict as the result of a "trigger event", through the process of negotiating a new balance of power and into a period of apparent resolution and relative calm.

Behind most explanations of conflict, and the balancing of power that is involved, is some form of social exchange theory (Roloff, 1981). Briefly, social exchange theory assumes 1) that the guiding force behind all human behavior is self-interest, and 2) that all interactions between people are based on an exchange of resources. These resources may be tangible or intangible, as real as a physical facility or as fragile and elusive as "respect". Within a political arena such as a school district, there are many resources to be distributed and the "self-interest" of various individuals or groups is often relatively easy to discern. The power struggle between groups is a struggle over the allocation of resources, but, more fundamentally, it is a struggle for control.

The tenets of self-interest and an exchange of resources lead quite naturally to the concept of a cost-benefit analysis, wherein the parties in a relationship weigh the costs and benefits of continuing their relationship as it currently exists. An increase in the costs or benefits to either party (or group) may result in conflict and ultimately an adjustment in the relationship. As a community changes, the costs and benefits for the members of the community change and so must their patterns of interaction. Social exchange theory encourages us to look at the 'self-interest' of the individuals or groups as they respond to the changing situation. In addition, the behavior of superintendents and school board members is easier to understand in terms of their changing perceptions of the cost-benefit ratio.

The third component of conflict theory that provided guidance in understanding the dynamics of school governance came from experimental games research. Essentially, games researchers suggest that the interactions between people are governed by rules, that people who are involved in conflict use a variety of strategies to win, and that the strategies used are dependent upon the moves of the other party to the conflict. Whereas social exchange theory suggests that people weigh the costs and benefits of a given relationship, games theory suggests a weighing of the costs and benefits of particular responses. Conflict interaction is sustained and its intensity determined by the moves and

countermoves of the participants. This view of conflict as a series of moves and countermoves, taken together with the cost benefit analysis suggested by exchange theory, forces an awareness of the very serious "games" that were being played. Games researchers base much of their work on the analysis of power relationships and the accumulation and use of power, a perspective that was useful in analyzing the political give and take of school board actions and elections. "The balance of power in a group often tips the scale in a productive or destructive direction. If a member perceives that he or she can dominate ... there is little incentive to compromise ..." (Folger and Poole, 1984). When a school district has a split board, a common phenomenon in big city districts these days, the balance of power is critical. On several occasions the future of the Denver Public Schools hinged on the decision and actions of a single board member. In each of those instances the pivotal board member had more power and influence than even the superintendent - a dramatic change from the days when superintendents hand-picked board members and controlled the agenda. The interview process provided an opportunity to hear about their decisions, as they weighed the costs and benefits to themselves and to the organization they served.

The Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy

School boards, whether elected or appointed, are subject to revision and change through the elective process. Communities and school boards tend to be stable, but lengthy periods of stability interspersed with periods of instability and conflict are common (Fullan, 1982). To provide for both change and continuity the term of office is generally from four to six years. As a result, changes in the community are reflected in the school board but not immediately.

Lutz and Iannaccone's Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy (Lutz and Iannaccone, 1978; Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970; Iannaccone, 1990) proposes a process whereby stability is the norm, with school districts adjusting and staying in alignment with changing community values through a process of incumbent defeat (of school board members), involuntary superintendent turnover (within two years) and outside succession. There has been considerable study of the theory over the past twenty years and it remains a viable and relatively simple means for understanding the political changes that occur within school districts. The theory offers an explanation for the vulnerability of the superintendent and the high turnover rates that accompany change.

A central premise of Dissatisfaction Theory is that all political systems tend to drift toward an organized central elite that over time becomes more closed to citizen input as it attempts to pursue its own goals and maintain existing power relationships. If at the same time, there are changes

in the community, the result is a widening gap between those who govern and those who are governed. Eventually the disparity between the two creates a growing dissatisfaction on the part of the governed and results in political action designed to establish a countervailing power and an adjustment of the power relationships. In school districts this is experienced as episodic change in policy rather than a continuous process of fine tuning and small incremental change. Incumbent defeat and superintendent turnover are means by which a community clarifies and defines its values (Hosman, 1989).

The election of school board members allows a measure of permeability between the district's governing body and the environment. Lutz and Iannaccone argue that the defeat of an incumbent school board member is tantamount to a mandate for new leadership and, ultimately, a new (outside) superintendent. But problems arise when that mandate, the expression of majority will, is in direct opposition to the prevailing judicial interpretation of the Constitution. In such situations increased voter activity may have unintended effects. When the court intervenes, the sequence of events that typically occur may change.

The Changing Role of the Superintendent and the School Board

A good working relationship between the superintendent and the school board is critical to effective school leadership. School boards in Denver, Colorado are representative bodies composed of seven elected officials who serve a six year term. It is their responsibility to hire a superintendent whom they believe is compatible with the values and beliefs of the majority on the board and, by extension, the community. McCarty and Ramsey (1971) offer a classification system for communities based on superintendent/school board roles and relationships. Those key relationships, it is argued, are a reflection of the power structure within the community (Spring, 1988). Their classification illuminates the political nature of the superintendency and the balance of power between superintendent and school board members. If school boards can be classified according to community characteristics, then superintendents can be classified by type according to their "fit", since certain superintendent behaviors are more adaptive under some conditions than others. There is an implication of very definite limits on the ability of a superintendent to exert leadership that runs counter to school board or community preferences. Conflict within a community and between board members is frequently translated into superintendent turnover.

McCarty and Ramsey suggest four distinct types of communities: 1) the Dominated community with a school board dominated by the economic power elite; 2) the Factional community with a

divided school board representing well-established and nearly equal factions; 3) the Pluralistic community with a carefully selected "status congruent" school board; and 4) the Inert community with a "sanctioning" school board. The board members and superintendents in each type of community have characteristic roles and relationships, and they deal with conflict differently. In a Dominated district the board is controlled by the "elite" business and professional members of the community, and conflict is de-emphasized. Board members may not be the power elite in the community but they are not trouble makers and they are responsive to the values and wishes of the elite. The superintendent appears to be a strong decision maker in control of the schools but in reality functions as a servant to the power structure. Educational policies and the allocation of resources provide a college preparatory curriculum for the children of the elite and another curriculum for the preparation of future employees. Conflict is avoided or de-emphasized whenever possible. Denver was a classic example of a dominated district in the late 50s/early 60s. The superintendent had been there since 1947 and the members of the school board were respected leaders in the community.

In Factional communities conflict is openly displayed and control of the school board shifts back and forth between almost equal factions. Superintendents may be fired regularly as power shifts from one faction to another. Educational policies frequently reflect the single issue or representative orientation of board members. Since the balance of power on the board may change, the most effective survival strategy for superintendents is to avoid taking sides and remain as silent as possible on most issues. According to McCarty and Ramsey, if the majority in power makes a decision, the superintendent "should avoid giving whole hearted support in case there is a shift in power". Large committees are created to study potentially explosive issues and help diffuse strong emotions. In racially divided districts there is generally an emphasis on providing increased educational opportunities for minorities. During the time period reported here, the characteristics of school governance in Denver changed from those of a Dominated community to those of a Factional community, but not all of the changes can be attributed to desegregation. There was a major population influx in the years immediately following the war, followed by a decline and rapid suburbanization, fueled by but also independent of desegregation efforts.

Method

This study was based on three primary sources of information; newspaper clippings, school board minutes, and interviews. Superintendents and school board members were the major focus of the study. An effort was made to understand the dynamics of social change and conflict as they were

experienced by school leaders. Ultimately, a study of the dynamics of leadership and change in the schools is a study of leadership and change in American society. Although we may not be able to control the future by understanding the past, it does help us to understand the continuing conflict and change taking place in our society and our schools. It also helps to understand how much or how little any one individual can actually do to influence the direction of societal change.

Traditional methods of gathering historical information (Barzun and Graff, 1970) included an examination of school board minutes, official publications of the school district and other community organizations, newspaper and magazine articles, books and court rulings. Documents of a more private nature such as personal letters, diaries and memos were used insofar as they were available and relevant. School board minutes and newspaper accounts were the primary source of information used to reconstruct the correct sequence of events. The district's Public Information Office generously opened their files and facilitated the gathering of information. Other offices within the administration provided information upon request. It was surprising to see how little historical information was actually kept on file about the superintendents and board members who had played such an important role in the district's history. Still, it was the accuracy and completeness of early district files that provided some of the ammunition that ultimately resulted in the court order. The district is more "gun shy" these days and all official publications, including the board minutes, are reviewed by the district's lawyers prior to adoption.

Interviews were conducted with key individuals who were identified through district records, newspaper accounts or word of mouth. Interviews were loosely structured "conversations" (Burgess, 1984) guided by the theoretical framework and a cursory overview of events gained through a review of the board minutes and newspaper accounts prior to the interview. A moderate level of ignorance was important in that the interviewees provided more in-depth information within the broader framework of their perception of events. As mentioned earlier, the sequence of events was reconstructed through public records. It was the interviews that provided information about the relative significance of different events.

Interviews were conducted one-on-one, in person or by telephone (if distance was a factor) and recorded. Tape recording the interviews made it easier to concentrate on the individual and the flow of the conversation. Without the tape recordings, much useful data would have been lost. In some instances it would have been due to the rapidity of the conversation, in others the loss would have been the result of the interviewer not knowing the significance of a statement until weeks or months after the interview. In addition, the richness of the recordings, complete with emphasis and pauses, proved to be a far superior resource than the words alone. There was only one former school

board member who declined to be interviewed and, of those who were interviewed, only one superintendent who declined to have the interview recorded. The advantage of collecting an oral history is that it "can provide insights into the private human motivations behind the actions represented in public documents and offer explanations of cryptic features of the written record....[it can] provide a wealth of detailed information that puts flesh on the bones of records and brings the events to life." (Allen and Montell, 1981).

Results

Post war governance in the Denver Public Schools was like that found in other parts of the country. Education was popularly viewed as apolitical, or at least non-partisan, and primarily of interest to older people, women, or families with children. The budget was relatively small, and few people showed much interest in how the schools were run. School board membership was the province of a small cadre of the town's elite, people who were recognized members of the community power structure. A new superintendent had arrived from the East, via the San Diego schools, in 1947. In a relatively short period of time he was able to turn community apathy and disinterest in the schools into community support. As his familiarity with the community grew and the community's confidence in his leadership grew, he assumed ever more power over the direction and operation of the schools. He remained as superintendent in Denver for twenty years. He worked long hours and appeared to know everything that went on in "his" district. There were excellent schools in Denver and the district had a good national reputation. In 1950, only three years into his superintendency, Dr. Oberholtzer was featured on the cover of TIME magazine.

By 1959, primarily for economic reasons, the process of selecting school board members changed; elections were combined with municipal elections, by action of the state legislature. The change resulted in heightened public awareness of school governance. What had been a semi-private affair of the PTA and school people was opened up to anyone who could get elected. In addition to changing the time of the elections, the time of the school board meetings was also changed - from an afternoon meeting to an evening meeting so that more people could attend. Both changes were supported if not instigated by a board member who was also active in the state legislature. Although school governance was being made more public, actual negotiation and decision-making occurred in the "superintendent's conference", a semi-private meeting prior to the public meeting when it came time for a vote. Consensus was the norm and everything appeared to be functioning smoothly.

As a result of the new procedures there were three unconventional board members on the

seven member board by 1961, each a voice for change, but with no common agenda. The board no longer consisted only of elderly, conservative members of the established power structure, and the activities of the board were more open to public view and discussion. It was an exhilarating time, a time of relative affluence and the air was ripe with the promise of change. The city was expanding through annexation and population growth. There were new schools to be built and important decisions to be made. Everything appeared to be business as usual - until the superintendent presented a proposal for a new school in north Denver. District leaders did not anticipate the strong negative reaction they got. All over the country racial issues were coming to the fore, but Denverites felt they were immune to the kind of bigotry and hatred they heard about in other parts of the country, and they were proud of the fact that blacks in their city were "treated just like everybody else". As one community leader commented,

> "There was no active hostility for the simple reason that people didn't feel that there was any reason to think otherwise. Their children were safely in schools that were fine. The black community's children were in schools that were not. It was okay if there were some black children in the schools with [the white children], but essentially the population was pretty well confined. They thought it was okay that a high school would be built that was of a much lesser caliber than any of the other high schools that were being built. all these things were fine. Nobody said anything and everybody thought it was great and they weren't threatened" (Taylor, 1990).

But things weren't' fine. The new school appeared to be deliberately small and designed to contain the black community. The new board members pushed for a study of the actual situation in Denver's schools. A committee was formed to study the issue. The 32 members of the committee were selected with great care from a list of over 500 applicants. It was a strategy that resulted in a pretty clear picture of the differences that existed between the schools in the city, and it bought time. But blockbusting in an upper middle class neighborhood that bordered the black community was putting pressure on the residents. They decided they would not abandon their community just because a few black families moved in and resolved to fight to maintain the quality of their schools and their neighborhood. Leaders of the black community had strong and influential allies in Park Hill.

Even though there were major issues rumbling in the background, the majority of Denverites

viewed the conflict as something that had nothing to do with them. They perceived no threat to the status quo, as evidenced by the fact that a campaign meeting that featured all five candidates drew only seven citizens! Racial issues were not a major topic of discussion, news accounts signalled out teacher demands for higher salaries and greater voice in the decision-making process as the "touchiest" issues of the campaign. As it turned out, another unconventional board member was elected, a woman who had campaigned for "progress" and a change in the status quo. The community appeared to be ready for change. As an article in the local newspaper pointed out: "The dividing line between the Old Guard and the New Wave is 1959 ... since the New Wavers started taking seats on the board, large scale shifts in board thinking and policy have developed" (Rocky Mountain News, 1963).

The board had an opportunity to appoint a respected black woman to the board when one of the Old Guard died during his term. After considerable stalling, and some political gamesmanship, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Denver was appointed to finish the term. It was an affront to the black community and doubled their resolve to have a winning candidate in the next election. And they did. In the meantime, the special study committee presented its report, and yes, they did find disparities between schools within the district. But when the superintendent and board suggested boundary changes to alleviate some of the problems that had been identified, they met with massive public resistance. The citizens of Denver were willing to acknowledge there was a problem and they certainly supported integration but "not this way" ... and "not in our school". It was getting increasingly difficult for the superintendent to maintain control and order in the district, but even with the level of controversy and conflict rising, he had the confidence and support of the voters.

Between 1965 and 1967 there were several important changes that had an effect on the course of desegregation in the Denver Public Schools. The interaction patterns on the school board had changed, the leadership of the district had changed as a result of the superintendents retirement, the silence of the "silent majority" had changed, and racial tensions increased at both the state and national levels. Political pressure and riots over the war in Vietnam were adding to the general feeling of unrest throughout the country.

Board members continued to discuss problems related to segregation and overcrowding, but the process was slow and frustrating. Those who favored integration wanted more and faster; those who feared it wanted to slow down the process. Still the community hadn't polarized on the issue. Board members were sympathetic to the plight of minorities but movement was slow and halting, they knew they were moving into unfamiliar and potentially dangerous territory. The "New Wave" board members saw themselves as representatives with constituencies. They were there because they

had been elected, not because they had been chosen by the school administration. It was important to let their supporters see where they stood on issues. The emotional overtones of board meetings increased and the use of the "superintendent's conference" to air concerns and negotiate differences away from public scrutiny was abandoned. The retirement of the superintendent in 1967 signaled the end of an era. As one of his successors remembered:

> "[An] ... analogy I once heard ... was that when he picked up the Denver Public Schools, it was like a young calf - kind of wobbly on its feet - and he literally put himself under it, and picked up this calf and walked around personally with it on his shoulders for twenty years. He ran the place, all by himself. Twenty years later, when he set this thing down, it was a fully grown animal that no one person ever again could get under and pick up". (Taylor 1990)

The "golden years" of education in the Denver Public Schools had come to an end. Many years of competent, paternalistic leadership and a legacy of strong central control left the district ill-prepared to deal with the events looming on the horizon.

The new superintendent had two new "bosses" before he even started the job. Between the time he was hired and the time he began in Denver, two new board members who had campaigned on a conservative antibusing platform had been elected. What had, as recently as 1964, been a dialogue about providing equal educational opportunity for all children, had been distilled into a single issue - busing. What had once been viewed as a passive process of allowing blacks and other minorities equal opportunity had become an issue of assuring equal opportunity. What had once been viewed as a process where blacks could gain without any sacrifice on the part of whites was increasingly viewed as a struggle for finite and limited resources. The growing perception that integration would "cost" something on the part of the white population was changing the nature of the dialogue. Desegregation was one thing; being forced to integrate was something else. Opposition was building.

Board members were openly at odds with each other, with two of them advocating more aggressive efforts to desegregate the schools, two who were just as strongly opposed to anything that could be considered "social engineering", and three who were trying to maintain a moderate position when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. The assassination was perceived as more than an affront to blacks, it symbolized the discrimination they had borne for years. Working with the system had been slow and frustrating. There had been many incidents in the past few years but none of them had been the kind of insults that moved people into the streets. the

death of Martin Luther King, Jr. was - it was the "trigger event" that mobilized Denver's black community. The black woman on the school board, Rachel Noel, recalled listening to "speaker after speaker" exhort from the steps of the City and County Building, "Those in decision-making positions should not delay in taking action." She recalled:

> "Even as I listened, and this is etched in my memory, I thought someone was talking right to me, because I sat on the school board, one of seven, and I was in a position of decision-making" (Taylor, 1990).

She knew that a resolution that would provide for "a comprehensive plan for the integration of the Denver Public Schools" was in the process of being drafted. The time had come for action. When she presented the resolution, it was no longer possible for the moderate board members to avoid making a decision. When the vote was taken - amidst great public debate and emotional upheaval - the conflict over desegregation was fully launched. Antibusing forces within the community, organized and coordinated by powerful conservative members of the elite, mobilized to systematically replace the "liberal" and "moderate" board members who had voted in favor of the resolution.

Martin Luther King was assassinated in April, 1968, the next school board election was in May of 1969. The new superintendent and his staff had been given a directive to proceed with developing a plan and they poured their energies into it throughout the summer. Riots at the Democratic National Convention and racial tensions exacerbated by the summer's heat provided the backdrop for the unveiling of the new superintendent's plan. It was a modest plan for gradual integration over a four year period but it only fueled the community's determination to make changes in the district's governance. During the height of conflict, there was some question as to who was leading and who was following. An assistant superintendent during the most intense conflict commented:

> "If Martin Luther King hadn't been killed, followed by Robert F. Kennedy's death; had there been a little different national climate, we might have been able to rationally look at the Gilberts Plan and implement it. But [the assassinations] made the likelihood of anybody looking at it in a rational sense and thinking about it moot. The climate just wasn't there. Given the fact that we had no control over those events [the assassinations]...we were in a position of damage control. [It was like being] hit by a torpedo.
>
> We were committed. We were saying we couldn't stay where we

were. We knew where we wanted to go, but we were leaders without followers, and we had no opportunity to build the followership.... (Taylor, 1990).

The two incumbents were soundly defeated in the next election and the balance of power on the board shifted. The first official action of the new board majority was to rescind the Noel Resolution. In doing so, it forced the pro-integrationists into action. To accept the actions of the majority was unthinkable, it was important to respond in a manner that would send a strong message to the community and its young people. This was a battle that had to be fought. The lawsuit was filed.

By 1971 there was a solid conservative, anti-busing majority on the board, the superintendent had been replaced temporarily by an insider who was firmly under the control of the board majority, and the Keyes vs. Board of Education case was working its way through the federal court system. The new board focused its attention on "stabilizing" the district but their consistent public posture of unanimity gave rise to suspicions that the board's business was being conducted privately. Four days before the 1969 election, the unanimous board announced their selection of a new superintendent. An appointment so close to the election was both a blatant attempt to extend control into the next administration and an unwarranted assumption that business would continue as usual. The election of two pro-integration candidates signaled another oscillation in the process of establishing a new balance of power. The school board had moved from a tightly knit group of conservative males united primarily by their opposition to busing, to a board that had at least one minority and a female from the liberal elite. The new board members were sworn in under tight security - a bombing incident in the school administration building clearly indicated that the conflict over desegregation was not finished.

In June of 1974 the Supreme Court handed down its decision and remanded the case to the District Court. The local judge found the district to be a "dual system" and ordered district-wide busing. A plan was developed by an external consultant and adopted by the judge when the board majority refused to cooperate in developing a plan of their own. The political costs of developing a plan far outweighed any perceived benefits for the majority of the board members. The superintendent at that time commented:

"We tested the water [with a variety of ideas] but the Judge said, no, they weren't adequate. We just thought we would lose our credibility with the community. We thought we should be more valuable as educators and as professional school administrators if we weren't held

> responsible for the crazy plan that was going to accomplish what they wanted to accomplish....when threatened with an outside consultant, in effect, we demurred and said it's going to take a crazy plan to do it, might as well be your crazy plan rather than our crazy plan. Then we could say we were going to take their plan and make it work. And we did! (Taylor, 1990).

The city's schools were integrated in the fall of 1974, without major incident. Busing continued to be the major focus of political activity at both the state and national level. In 1975 it was once again the focal point of school board elections. A deeply divided community elected one highly vocal anti-busing candidate and one pro-busing candidate. The two women came from opposite ends of the social strata in the city. For the one, it was an opportunity to pull the city together behind the integration effort and focus on improving the quality of the schools. For the other, this was an opportunity to continue her battle against the "Naziism" of court imposed busing. Within fifteen years the board had been transformed from an exclusive group of prominent elderly citizens who were hand picked by a powerful superintendent to a socially, racially and ethnically diverse group of relatively young, politically inexperienced men and women, many of whom were single-issue candidates.

In the years following desegregation, there were adjustments to be made in the integration plan. By the spring of 1976 the district had settled into a routine - but not the board. The last election had magnified the differences that already existed on the board. Friction between board members soon overshadowed everything else. The superintendent who had been selected by the unanimous board found it increasingly difficult to please either the board majority or the community. As a result of some political maneuvering he was given an extension to his contract only to be bought out by the new majority in the months following the next election. It was a messy process and the community was growing increasingly impatient with the bickering on the board. By 1977 a new superintendent, an insider who re-established strong central control, was in place and the board settled into an uneasy but relatively peaceful routine. The conflict cycle appeared to have run its course and a new balance of power was in place.

Conclusions

Conflict theory proved to be a very useful organizer for the study of leadership responses to desegregation. On closer examination, Rummel's phases were impossible to untangle, particularly the latent conflict phase and the final stage of relative calm when a new balance of power is in place. His concept of a "trigger event" that signals the initiation of conflict was exemplified by the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the introduction of the Noel Resolution. The tenets of social exchange theory appear to have been affirmed by the interviews and the events that occurred in Denver, although there were a few individuals who appeared to be more altruistic than their contemporaries. Events followed the general pattern of moves and countermoves that would be predicted by game theory. Decisions made by board members and their own comments about those decisions indicated they thought of them in a cost-benefit context.

The sequence of events in Denver did not follow the pattern predicted by Dissatisfaction Theory. According to Dissatisfaction Theory, changes within a community result in increased voter dissatisfaction that leads to incumbent defeat followed within two years by involuntary superintendent turnover and outside succession. Although incumbent defeat and superintendent turnover were related to broader changes in the community, the simple relationships that seem to be impled by the theory did not hold true for Denver. With time, changes in school governance did result in greater alignment with the demographic and political changes in the community, but the mechanism by which that adjustment occurred appears to be more subtle, at least when the courts intervene. It is probably true that large voter turnout was a function of voter dissatisfaction with the governance of the district, but the largest turnout appears to have been a demand for a return to the previous balance of power rather than an adjustment to the new situation.

Theoretical predictions of outside succession within two years of incumbent defeat were not observed in Denver. The lack of congruence was due to a variety of circumstances. For example, a powerful superintendent did not leave until six years after the first incumbent defeat signaled changing conditions. When he did retire, he was replaced by an outsider, as predicted by the theory. In the tumultuous years that followed, the superintendency alternated between insiders and outsiders.

The changes in school governance reflected the racial and ethnic diversity that had always been an unacknowledged part of Denver, factors that increased in importance as white flight contributed to the changing demographic composition of the city. Using McCarty and Ramsey's terminology, school governance in Denver had shifted from a superintendent dominated district to a factional district. The net result of the conflict over desegregation was decreased autonomy on the

part of the superintendent and greater "interference" in administrative matters from suspicious board members anxious to please their constituencies.

Although superficial examination of voter activity in Denver appears to support Dissatisfaction Theory, a closer examination does not. The decision to deliberately mix students of different races and ethnic groups did result in increased voter activity, but it appears to have been an effort to stop change rather than to demand it. Paradoxically, it was in the terms following the election of "liberal" candidates that the district appears to have made the greatest progress towards adapting to the changing demographic and ethnic composition of the community. Change and adaptation appears to have come from a stable core of individuals, the "consistent voters", who were committed to the continued survival and relevance of the institution. Protest voting was functional primarily in that it let those in governance know how the electorate felt. Consistent voting, on the other hand, appears to have been more deliberate with clearer goals. This study suggests that the alignment between community and school governance was achieved by a stable core of individuals who consistently voted in school board elections throughout the period that was studied and reported here. Long term adaptive changes were made by this consistent core, not those who were relatively indifferent to district activity most of the time.

Educational Significance

This study describes the impact of social change and conflict on school leaders, illustrates the usefulness of using oral history to illuminate the personal dynamics of change within a community, and explains some of the reasons for the changes in the governance structure common to many large urban districts. The history of changes in Denver offers insight into the changes in school governance throughout America.

Increased state and national involvement in the schools has raised serious questions about "local control" and the efficacy of big city superintendents. When national or state interests conflict with local preferences, superintendents and school board members are put into very difficult situations. Their ability to understand conflict and change may make it easier for them to "ride out the turbulent times" and provide long term effective leadership. The high rate of superintendent turnover and the single issue focus of many school board members is ultimately not in the best interests of a strong and effective educational system. As demographic changes within the country and economic forces from the larger global community continue to force change on America's schools, it becomes increasingly important to understand conflict management and the change process.

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